

A Page in Time



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Cover Illustration: View of Smithfield's Main Street before 1907 by William Weaverling

INTRODUCTION

This book began as an attempt to enhance the creative writing skills of my sixth and seventh grade SEARCH students, many of whom already could write well. When I decided on the historical novel as our writing project, I felt extremely satisfied, because students could combine their creative writing and research skills. I began by requiring that the book's setting be in Isle of Wight County--what better place than our home? After sifting through all the materials made available to us by local authors, the time period and plot was theirs to choose.

My students relied heavily on articles from the Daily Press and The Times Herald Newspaper, Newport News, Virginia, written during the years 1982 through 1988 by Mrs. Segar Cofer Dashiell. Her book, SMITHFIELD, A PICTORIAL HISTORY was just as indispensable in their research. The pictures as well as the text became daily reference sources to guide them. Much information was derived from MANY VOICES, an oral history of Isle of Wight County, Virginia, 1900-1950. Another valuable source was "Isle of Wight County History" written in 1954-55 by a committee organized by Mr. Oliver Greenwood, composed mostly of fourth grade teachers. Also, Mrs. Helen Haverty King and Miss Ruth Haverty visited our class and shared their knowledge of county and town history.

Students worked alone, in pairs, in groups, at home, in school--in whatever ways that worked to produce the best stories. Much sharing, comparing, deleting, and editing were done in an atmosphere made more exciting from the knowledge that this effort would become a published book based on real events! A field trip to historic St. Luke's Church, a visit to the Isle of Wight Museum, a walking tour of Smithfield, Mrs. King's visit to our classroom--all helped to verify the history of what we had written and to make our fictional and descriptive accounts easier to write.

We continued to plan, discuss, research, cooperate, collaborate, and illustrate. The final result is more fiction than history, a natural outcome with creative and imaginative minds. Now, it is finished, and we are proud that we persevered and at times wrote until we could write no more. Because of this class endeavor, we all more fully appreciate the importance of our heritage. To Mrs. Dashiell and others who cared enough to research and record the past, we offer our gratitude.

Floydette Pitt
February 20, 1989

THE GREAT SNOW

It was December 1, 1917, and Joe Underwood was in the living room decorating the big family Christmas tree. Mrs. Underwood was in the kitchen cooking a turkey for supper. Mr. Underwood came in from cutting firewood just when his wife had finished cooking the turkey. Mr. Underwood called Joe to come to the table for supper. After supper, Joe went to bed, because he had school the next day.

When Joe woke up the next morning, he looked out the window and saw a blanket of white snow covering everything! The trees in the yard, the ground, everything! He jumped up and down and shouted happily, for he knew that since there was snow, there would be no school that day! He decided to go over to Jack's house after breakfast. The Pagan had frozen up enough to play on. Joe bought a sled at Bett's for 50 cents. The boys planned to sled down the hill on Commerce Street and on to the creek. When they had gone down, they saw a horse and buggy on the ice and began to follow it. When they got to the bridge, the ice started to crack, and the carriage fell through. The boys ran to get help, and they were able to save the man and lady, but the horse and buggy were lost.

Back at home, Mamma and Papa were talking about how much damage the storm had caused. All of Mr. Brown's livestock had been outside and froze to death. "Just froze up and fell

over," said Mamma.

"No livestock gonna last through this here winter," said Papa.

The next day, Jack and Joe went sledding again, and school was still out. When they got to the creek, Jill was at the bottom of the hill ice skating with a brand new pair of skates (she was the richest girl in Smithfield). She said she got them up at the drug store, and they had a few more pairs left. Joe and Jack went up there and got a pair and took turns using them. The night before, there had been a terrible sleet storm, and it had knocked down some telephone poles. Ice was everywhere. It was a perfect day for ice skating.

The next day was Thursday, and there wouldn't be any school for the next two weeks, because Christmas vacation had finally begun. It was the Underwoods' turn to get the newspaper. The day wouldn't be any warmer. Not many people were out, for it was -1 degree Farenheit. There was another great big sleet storm, and people were beginning to wonder if the winter would ever let up. Jack and Joe decided to go marsh walking, because the marsh was frozen over. It was as slick as a wet banana. They walked back and got the sled and ice skates. They went out into an open field, and Jack started skating in a place they had been before. Joe heard a scream and breaking ice. Jack had fallen through! Joe quickly found some old rope and threw it to him. He tried and tried to pull Jack up, but couldn't. Then the rope snapped. Joe ran to the

warehouses and got a couple of big black men to come and give Jack some help. By the time they got back, he was unable to move. They got him out and took him home. The doctor came and told Jack's parents he might need to have his right foot amputated. But no cars or boats were able to move in the ice!

ADVENTURE ON ICE

It was January 4, 1918, and Mom came pounding at Laura's bedroom door. "Time for school!"

"Aw, Mom," Laura said sleepily.

Mrs. Turner went downstairs to fix breakfast when Laura's father came in the house freezing. "It's so cold out there," Dad said, "the cows have icicles on their tails." In a basket, father had the newborn piglets. He put them by the wood stove. Laura's brothers came down stairs for their breakfast.

"Dad do we have to go to school today?" Dick asked.

"I don't see why you can't go," Dad said. Then someone knocked at the front door. Mr. Jones told us that school was closed since nobody showed up.

After breakfast, everyone went sleigh riding. "Race ya to the bottom," Ben said, thinking his sleigh was the fastest around. Mrs. Turner called saying it was time to go to Grandma's house.

"How are we going to get there? The roads are icy and dangerous," Laura said in a high tone.

"Your daddy has decided to try to drive the car across the river!" mother said.

Everyone was so excited, they hopped in the Model T, covered up their legs and feet with blankets, and then they were on their way. When they were almost to the river's edge, Mr. Turner stopped to check the gas. "Get ready, everyone," he said. The car rolled down the hill and hit the ice at top speed. Screeech! They were going from side to side.

"Watch out for that piling!" mother screamed.

"This is great fun," Dick said excitedly. Dad somehow managed to get across the river, and no one got hurt. When they arrived at Grandma's house in Battery Park, they told her all about their adventure.

THAW

Two weeks went by before the Pagan thawed enough for Jack to be taken to the hospital in Norfolk. He stayed for a week, but it seemed like an eternity to Joe.

On February 17, school had finally reopened. The children in the country used heated bricks to keep their feet warm on the ride to school in the canvas covered school wagon, sometimes called the gypsy wagon. As soon as the long ride was over, they rushed to their classroom and crowded around the woodstove to get warm. The students who lived in town and walked to school were the first to arrive. Everyone was glad to see Jack back to normal. It had been a close call for him.

The blizzard was over. Smithfield had finally thawed out. It was back to normal, all right.



THE OLD SCHOOL ON INSTITUTE STREET

TEA WAR

One Saturday afternoon, Jack, Joe, Dick, and Laura were walking down Main Street. They saw a man with a package walking along ahead of them. "Who's that?" asked Laura.

"Don't you know him? That's Tea War!" exclaimed Joe.

"Yeah, he delivers things for people," said Dick.

"Oh, I didn't know that," said Laura. "Why do they call him Tea War?"

"No one knows," answered Jack.

Tea War was born in 1861 in a log cabin on the west end of Main Street. There was one thing about him that really made him different. He was blind. He had been born blind. He was a remarkable man, because he learned how to take care of himself without any help. Maybe once in a while people might help him, but the majority of them wouldn't help him.

When he was about ten years old his mother married, and they moved to Surry. He didn't like it there, so he walked back to Smithfield and lived in the back of a store. Nobody knew how he did it, but he made it back to town. Sometimes when folks were heading to Surry, they would give him a lift so he could see his mother.

When people read Tea War the newspaper, he always seemed to remember what they had read. He was blind, but smart. People believed in him and even the store owner gave him a job. He was the delivery boy. He always brought back the correct change and went to the right house!

Suddenly Joe called out, "Tea! Who am I, Tea? I bet you don't know me." Tea ran his old, thin, brown fingers over Joe's head, touched his face lightly, and stammered: "You is Mr. Joe Underwood, Mr. Joseph Underwood's son!"

"How did he do that?" Laura asked in disbelief.

"He knows everybody," answered Joe.

The children watched Tea War continue along the street, tapping his cane and talking to himself, repeating all the things he knew about each place he passed.

LAZY DAY

One windy afternoon, a few boys were walking around town looking for something to do. They had gone in stores, kicked cans down the street, and played marbles in Bobby's backyard. There was nothing left to do. All of a sudden they heard three blasts from the whistle; it always blew around this time of day. They took off down to the wharf, running through yards trying to get to Dick Thomas's house. When they got there, Dick was already outside sitting on the lawn. "What took you so long?" he asked.

"We were on the other side of town, and we had to run all the way down here. Besides, why wouldn't your mother let you come out?" asked Jack.

"Well, my grandparents are supposed to be coming tomorrow, so I had to help clean up the house. Then I have to go to the store later. Maybe you guys can come with me."

"That's all right," said Jack. "We're planning to go to the docks, and if we have enough money, we might buy a rowboat and go fishing."

"All right, well, maybe another time."

The group went down to the docks and met Jessie and Joe there. Everyone was there and had brought money for the boat, except Laura. Nobody knew where she was. "Well, let's see if we have enough without her," said Bobby. It turned out that they didn't, so they all started walking toward Laura's house. On the way they saw her coming, so they ran to meet her. She had her money! Now they had enough to buy the boat!

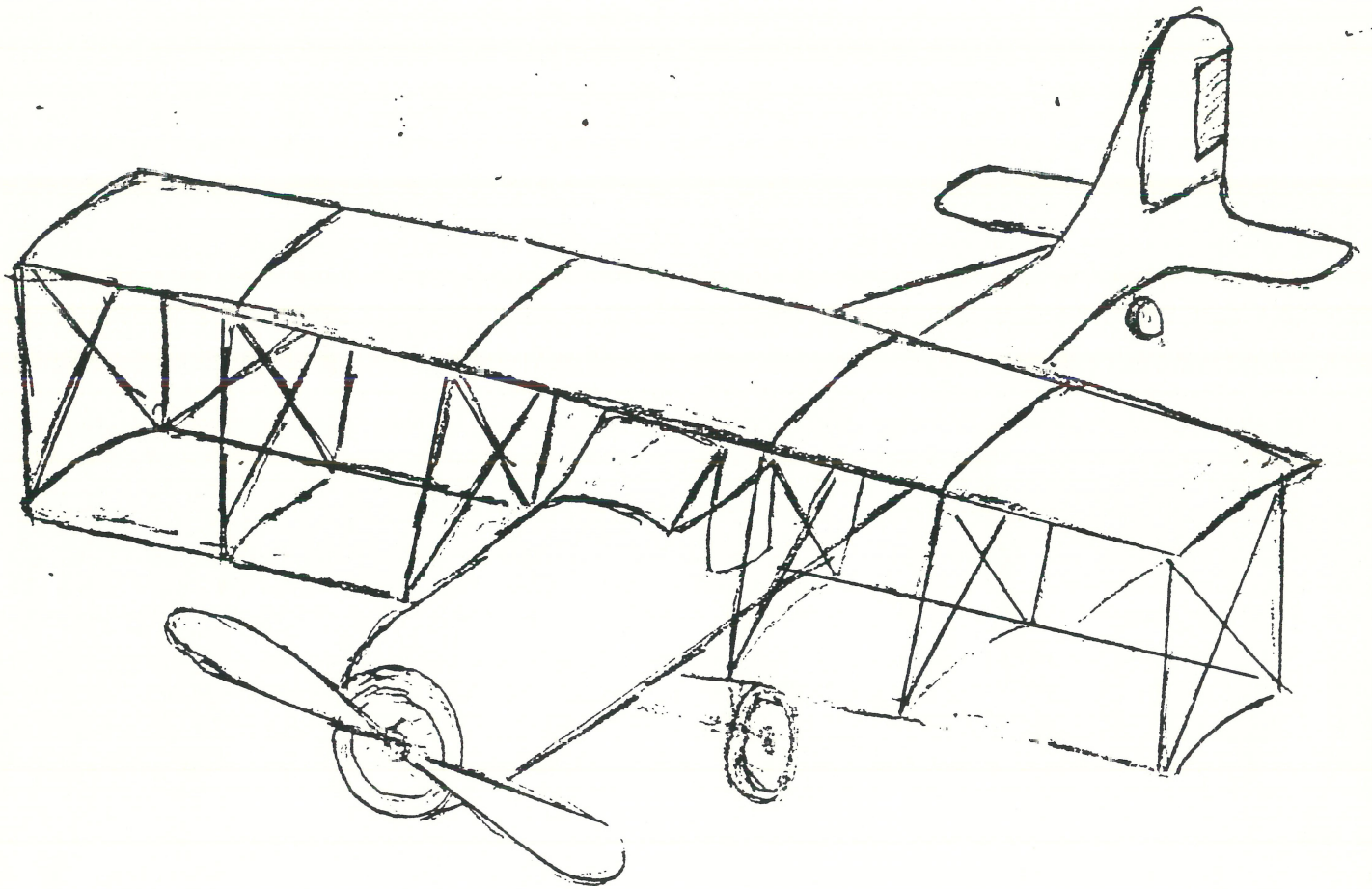
AIRPLANE!

On the morning of May 8, 1918, almost everyone in Smithfield had heard about the marvelous airplane that was coming from Langley Field to land on the baseball diamond. When it came, Laura was sitting in the most boring class in the world. All they did was sit there and get lectured. It was starting to get hot outside. Summer was coming fast. They really did need some excitement, and that's what they got.

They were sitting there when all of a sudden this big roaring sound filled the sky. Laura saw a shadow come over the school. It was finally there! Everyone deserted the school. Homes and stores were empty. People didn't seem to care if things got stolen; all they cared about was seeing the airship. Laura was surprised to see principal Cox leave the school, too. It looked like a stampede racing to the ballfield. A Model T drove up, and it was Col. J. W. Holloway. He brought a flag to show the airship where to land, but every direction that flag went, so did the crowd. The pilot didn't want any people to get hurt, so he didn't land on the ballfield, but in a cow pasture down the road. The ground was soft and the plane tripped over on its nose and snapped off the propellor. Those cows didn't know what to do so all they did was "MOO". They finally moved, and old man Tucker wasn't very pleased with the airplane in his cow pasture, but he cooled down.

A lot of things got lost during the airship landing. For instance, Mrs. Hardy lost her two boys. She hadn't even noticed that they were gone until the airship landed, and when it did, she was hysterical! She went around screaming, "Where are my children?" She finally found them.

None of the banks or stores or houses were robbed. Everyone was too interested in the airplane. After a while, a mechanical worker came and repaired the damage. The plane took off the next morning without a single problem. Laura, Jack, and Joe were there to wave goodbye. Summer was approaching



quickly. They would soon be out of school and hanging around the wharf again.

DRUG STORE CROWD

Anyone who lived during the war knew what you meant when you said, "The Drug Store Crowd". That was a group of people who went to Dr. Wilson's drug store almost every day to get a drink and talk. When Dr. Wilson got a soda fountain, he attracted a whole lot more customers.

While some of the ladies were sitting in the drugstore talking and having a soda, some other ladies were out at their jobs. They worked at the bank, a law office, or one of the stores. Dr. Wilson got his business at 11 o'clock when the women went on their breaks. They would meet with their friends who didn't work and tell about their jobs.

Once when the drugstore crowd was having one of their parties, the governor walked in. At first, they didn't realize who it was until someone said, "That looks like the governor." Soon everyone was over talking to him. He had a cup of coffee and a piece of homemade apple pie and then he left. He gave the cashier 75 cents even though his bill was only 25 cents. Laura's mother was one of the people who was there. When she walked in and saw the governor, she really did faint and fall on the floor. The cashier came running over and poured a cold glass of water on her face and she woke up.

SPRATLEY'S ISLAND

It was Saturday morning, and it was a hot one, so Joe, Jack, and Laura decided to walk along the creek to cool off. After about an hour, Joe noticed an island he had never seen before. As they got closer, they saw a small rowboat pulled up onto the land. It was covered up by leaves, sticks, and pine straw as if someone tried to hide it. They also saw large footprints in the dirt. Their curiosity drew them into the woods following the tracks. As they continued on, they crossed through the marsh to the mainland and saw a small shack. They looked inside and saw no one was there. Just then a man appeared with a gun in one hand and a squirrel in the other and said, "What are you kids doing here?"

"We just stopped by to take a rest; we didn't know anyone lived here," replied Jack, scared to death.

"Well, you shouldn't have, but now since you're here, what can I do for you?" He sat down and began to skin the squirrel.

"We were just marsh walking when we saw the island and decided to get closer," said Joe.

The man said his name was John and they needn't be afraid. He told them a story about one time when he almost fainted from fear. "One dark, cloudy night, I was walking by St. Luke's Church and saw a large white figure with wings coming out of a grave! It turned out to be a goose. It had fallen in a newly dug grave and was making all kinds of racket trying to get out. I thought it was a ghost!"

The four talked for about another hour when the children had to leave. John gave them a ride home in his boat. When they got out, they promised to visit again and headed back into town just in time for supper.



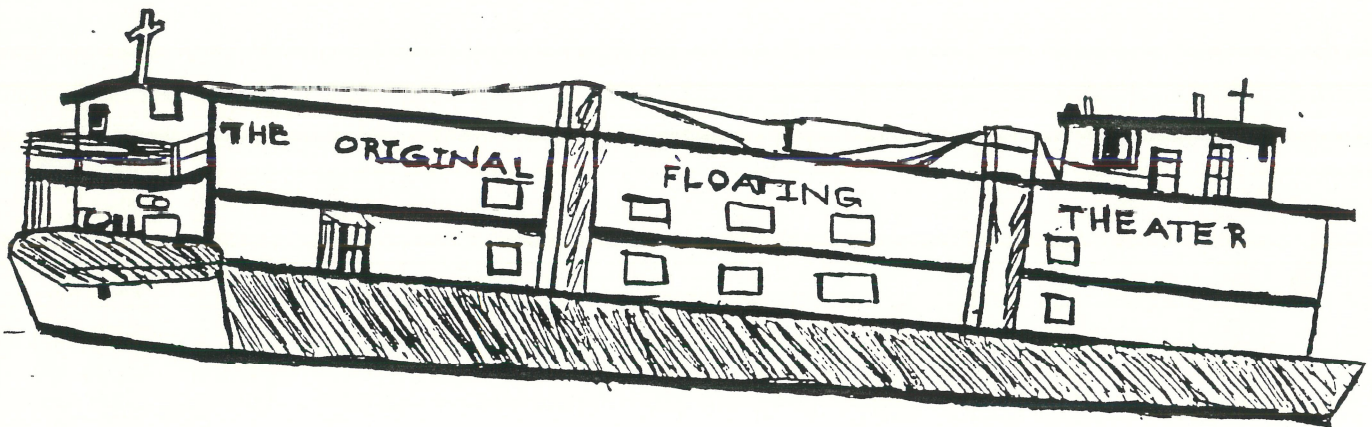
THE FLOATING THEATER

Anna was reading the newspaper, but was suddenly distracted by the sounds of music outside. She ran to the window and saw a boy playing the accordion and shouting "Come one, come all, to "St. Elmo" at the James E. Adams Floating Theatre. 25 cents for the play and 15 cents for the concert afterwards." Anna knew that the theatre would be coming to Smithfield just as it had since she was a little girl. "St. Elmo's" was very familiar to her, since she had played the part of Millie in Smithfield High School's performance of the play. She thought about how wonderful it would be if she could be in a real play on the Adams Floating Theatre with a professional cast.

Anna went downstairs for lunch. As soon as she walked in the kitchen, her mother told her that the actress who played the part of Millie had the flu, and Mr. Adams was looking for a replacement. "Mother! May I walk to the theater and ask if they need me? I know all the lines."

"I think that would be fine," Mrs. Hayden said.

Anna was so excited she could hardly walk down the hill to the docks. When she entered, she asked when the first play was. That night, she was told! Anna explained that she had been in "St. Elmo's" in high school. They asked her to stay



and read the part of Millie! Anna's heart started beating faster and faster. She got a sudden chill up her spine and started to shiver. She was so scared and nervous. A lady handed her the script and told her to read. The words seemed so small, but she read anyway. She was at the theater all morning, and although tired when she got home, she was happy. "I was very nervous, mummy; I was shaking and everything during the rehearsals, but they're going to let me try the part!"

Every day Anna went to the theater to rehearse, and every night that week there was a performance.

COMING HOME

When Theodore Underwood got to Smithfield, he couldn't believe how some things had changed while others stayed the same. He found out that the store he had worked in before the war had gone out of business. However, he was unaware of the many, many things that changed since he left. More than one thousand soldiers had left the ship earlier from Camp Morrison, and they were on Main Street to begin the big Labor Day celebration. Once everyone was in place, they had the flag-raising ceremony. After that, the soldiers had a big, big lunch. After everyone ate, the athletic meet began. Theodore watched as men he knew were competing and winning in many events. He was waiting for the basketball games to begin, for his squad was competing in them. Finally, it was time to start. The games were being held in elimination round form.

His squad, Squad 6, won its first game against Squad 15 easily, with a final score of 30-10. The next game was against Squad 37, a squad that bragged about its "tall soldiers who spent spare time playing basketball". However, Squad 6 held tight, and the crowd was on the edge of its seats throughout the game. They went wild at the end of the game, and Squad 6 won, 70-68! Then came the final game against Squad 24. Squad 6 took an early lead, 20-14. Then Squad 24 pulled ahead, 30-28. At the end of the fourth period, the score was tied, 70-70. In sudden death, Squad 6 almost got a basket. Then, a Squad 24 player got the ball in a basket. Too bad for him, because it was the wrong basket! The final score was 72-70, Squad 6 winning. After the game, Theodore walked over to the baseball field and watched some of it. Some of the soldiers were playing horseshoes over by the schoolhouse. There were relay races being run there, too. Some of the young people were going to a dance at Morgart's Beach later, but Theodore decided not to go. He learned the next day that the floor was so crowded you could hardly dance.

Theodore was happy to be back in Smithfield after the long months away at war. After a few days, he began to look for a job. He searched everywhere for something that paid well, but he didn't have any luck. He finally decided to try to make some money cleaning stores and businesses. When the floating theater came to town, he was hired to sweep up after each performance. One night while cleaning he saw an attractive

young lady and wondered who she was. The director called out "Anna Hayden", and she answered. As she walked down the aisle, they bumped into each other, and Anna fell to the floor. Theodore rushed to make sure she was all right. She had a little scrape on her hand but nothing serious. He helped her off the floor and apologized, "I'm Theodore Underwood, and I'm terribly sorry, miss. I should have been paying closer attention."

Anna flushed and said, "That's all right; accidents happen. I'm Anna Hayden."

"I know," smiled Theodore.

MOONSHINE

It was Sunday morning and Joe just got up. "Joe," his mother called, "get down here now before your breakfast gets cold."

"I'm comin', Mom," answered Joe, as he hesitantly got out of his warm plaid quilted bed. After he got dressed, he walked down the stairs, smelling the bacon and eggs. After breakfast, he went outside and down to Jack's house. They went exploring in the woods over behind Windsor Castle. They found a trail and decided to follow it. Fog was just lifting off the ground, and it left an ample amount of dew remaining on the grass. After a while they started getting hungry, so they sat down and got some of their food out of their knapsack. After eating they headed on and soon came to a clearing. As they crept

closer, they saw an old looking shack, and heard some voices coming toward them. Inside the shack, they could faintly see a table with six men around it. They were curious, so they crept closer. Suddenly, Jack tripped and fell, making quite a bit of noise, as he hurt his leg. Four of the men ran out, yelling as they did. Jack and Joe started running back down the trail until they ran out of breath. They were so tired, they sat down by a big oak tree to rest. They could still hear the men, so they got back on the trail and hurried towards town. When they got back, they realized they had left the knapsack which had their food, compass, and canteen in it. They would have to go back! But not now-they'd go tomorrow.

Jack spent the night with Joe. They skipped breakfast and headed back for the woods. As they found the trail, their eyes were searching for the shack. They spied it and saw something they hadn't seen in their hurry to leave the day before. It was a still! The men were making illegal moonshine! "No wonder they wanted us out of here!" said Joe. "There's enough whiskey here for a town twice the size of ours!" All of a sudden, Jack saw the knapsack partially covered by leaves. He quickly picked it up and could hardly keep up with Joe as they ran home as fast as their legs would carry them!

PICNIC

"Good morning," said Theodore.

"Well, good morning. You seem mighty happy today," said

Mr. Underwood. "So tell us what you did while we were gone yesterday."

"Well, I got up about five minutes after you left and went to a picnic and just happened to pick Anna Hayden's basket. Then we went to the hangman's tree to have a peaceful lunch. At least, that's how we had planned it. It didn't turn out that way.

"What made you go to a picnic basket party, son? You know we don't have money to spend freely!" scolded his mother.

"I know, Ma, I know. But I only spent a dollar."

"A whole dollar! Shame! Well, go on."

Well, I started to tell the story about the man who was hanged three times. When I finished, I noticed Anna was trembling with fright. I told her it was only a silly superstition, but she still thought it was true. We went on eating, and Anna was staring into space. She said she wanted to go home, so I took her.

"Theodore, what a dreadful thing to do to a young lady like her!" Mrs. Underwood wailed.

"I promised we'd never go there again, and we never will."

"Good, son. I hope you never do," said his father.

TRIP TO NORFOLK

At the docks, Joe and Jack met Captain Jester and asked him if he was going out later on. He said he was-in about an hour. They asked him if he needed help with his net. He said,

"Yeah," so they went to ask their parents' permission. One hour later they were back at the docks.

On the way out they trolled for fish. They caught two rockfish and three trout. When they got to the nets, they found a boat had gone through the middle and cut them. There were still lots of fish, including three sharks.

When they got back to the docks they unloaded the fish. Captain Jester asked them if they would come back tomorrow and help him take the fish to Norfolk. "Wow, what an adventure," thought Jack. They would have to be back at 5AM tomorrow. When he got home, his Ma told him to go get a bath before supper. As he ate, Jack told about his adventures that day. They had peanut pie for dessert. His mother said he could go tomorrow and Joe could spend the night. Jack ran over to Joe's after supper, and he could go, too. They asked Joe's mother if he could spend the night, and she said he could.

The next morning they got up at 4AM and ate breakfast before they went back to the docks. Captain Jester was loading the boat. All the fish were on ice, so they had to wear gloves to move the crates. At about 5:15, they left for Norfolk. They got there about 8:30 and went to Boykins Canning. They unloaded, and then Captain Jester took them to get something to eat. They walked around for a while and then started back to Smithfield.

When they left, it was about 3PM. On the way home, the engine stopped. They had run out of coal! It took about an

hour before they could get some and continue the trip home. They thanked Captain Jester for lunch and for taking them. They got home and told all about their adventures. Then they went to bed. What an exciting day it had been!

The next morning they decided to go down to the floating theater where they were going to watch the practice for the night show. They met Tom's uncle there. He gave them free tickets to see the show!

LAST PERFORMANCE

It was an hour until the last matinee performance of the play. Anna was as nervous as she'd ever been. There were more people in attendance than any of the other afternoons.

When Anna got on stage, she was great - the best person in the play. Then all of a sudden, someone smelled smoke, and before anyone could do anything, the stage was on fire! Anna ran off stage. She helped some of the children up front get out. Boom! The ceiling fell through, and Anna was trapped! The only choice she had was to jump from the balcony. It was a huge risk, but she had to do it. The next thing she knew, she was lying on the floor crying, and her ribs hurt. Then Theodore was there and picked her up and rushed her outside. He took her straight home and stayed until he was assured she was all right. Anna's family began to see Theodore in a different light that day.

STRANGE WEDDING

It was All Hallow's Eve, and Jack was going to a sufferage wedding. He got his Sunday suit out of the wardrobe, his shirt, and the lace collar that he had borrowed from his sister. The flowers that he would carry were all ready and waiting in a basket downstairs. Jack felt a little foolish being asked to take the part of a bridesmaid, but all the other boys were going to, so he wanted to be a good sport. Now that he was ready, he went to meet his friends outside the new high school on James Street. Bobby was all dressed up as the groom, Jonathon as the best man, Ed as the minister, and Delk as the train-bearer. Everybody was laughing at each other. It was time for the wedding. There was a big crowd in the high school, and everybody was ready for a good time.

The wedding was about to begin, and everybody took his place. The piano started to play "The Wedding March", and the doors opened. Each person came out half standing straight, half laughing at each other. The girls were dressed in stiff white skirts and waists. They wore men's ties and colors, and carried little canes. Then the groom came out, shortly followed by the bride, and took their places. The minister, who was Ed Martin, welcomed everyone to the wedding. The vows were said, and the couple was pronounced man and wife, but nobody would do any kissing. The sufferage wedding was over, and the party was about to begin. The older folks had fixed punch, popcorn, cake, and other goodies. All in all, it was a

good way to have a silly time on All Hallow's Eve.

TURKEY SHOOT

It was the day of November 18. Jack and Joe had heard news of a turkey shoot. It was to be held in old Mr. Brown's field. "Gosh, wouldn't that be fun," said Jack.

"It would be neat," replied Joe. There was a problem, though. Neither of the boys had rifles. Where could we get a rifle, thought Joe. "Hey, my grandfather has a couple he may let us borrow!"

The next day, Jack and Joe went to Joe's grandfather's house. Mr. Underwood said they could use them, but he would have to come along. It was decided that they would meet that afternoon at 6 o'clock behind Mr. Brown's place. When they got there, the shoot had already begun and three people had won turkeys. They paid their fee and Grandpa showed them how to load the rifles. Then he explained the rules. Jack shot first and hit the target but not a bullseye. Next it was Joe's turn. He shot and hit the ring right outside the bullseye. When Grandpa Underwood shot, he hit the bullseye and got a turkey! When this one man was shooting, a bottle hit his foot and interrupted his concentration. The gun went off, and it hit a judge in the side! He began to bleed, and someone went with him to the doctor. The judge had to be taken to Norfolk in Mr. Gwaltney's brand new Model T. The man who threw the bottle had to go to court.

Since Jack and Joe had seen what happened, they were considered witnesses. They were sworn in at court and asked what happened. Joe testified that he thought the man was drunk. He clearly thought the man was guilty of deliberately throwing the bottle. Jack on the other hand testified just the opposite. He said he thought the man probably was drunk, but he didn't believe that he deliberately threw the bottle. The man was convicted and sentenced to a year in jail.

It had been an exciting week for lots of people, including Jack, Joe, and Grandpa Underwood, of course.

CORNSHUCKING

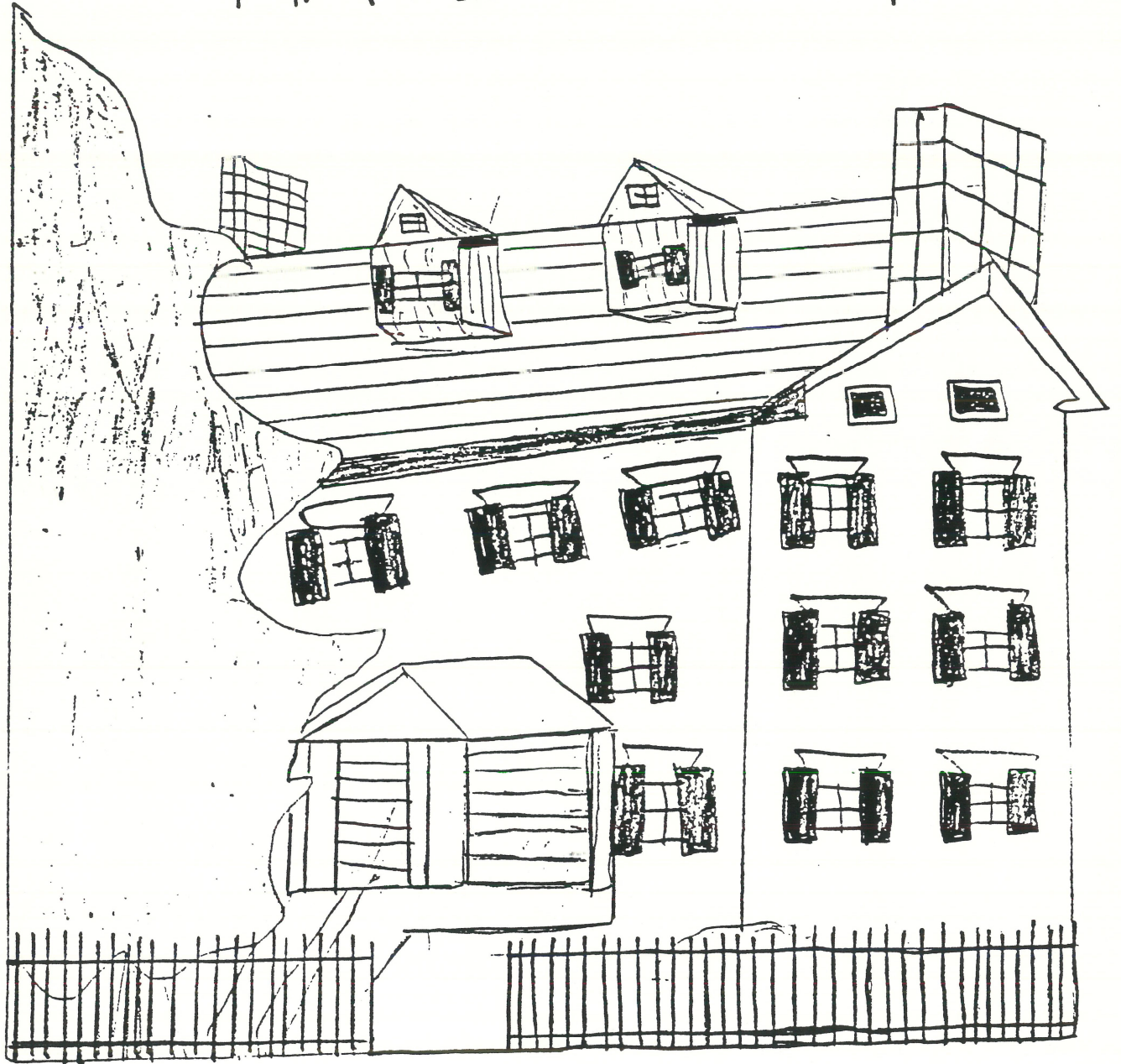
Anna and Theodore were walking home from church. "Would you like to come to a corn-shucking party next Sunday afternoon?" asked Theodore.

"I'd love to, but I'll have to ask my parents. I'm sure they'll let me go." Just then they noticed that they were in front of Anna's house. "Well, goodbye. I have to go in now."

"See you next Sunday. I'll come by after church to pick you up for the party. Bye." He gave her a quick peck on the cheek. Anna floated up to her room.

The next Sunday, Theodore and Anna walked to the party down Jericho Road. When they arrived, they were early, so Theodore went outside to help the men lay the corn in long, straight rows. Anna went in and helped the women in the kitchen. Soon people began to arrive, and the party began.

HAYDEN HALL



After two hours of cornshucking, they ate dinner. A few people left afterwards, but most stayed to stew sugar. It was work but a lot of fun, too. It had been a long and enjoyable day for everyone.

When Theodore was walking Anna home, they stopped in the middle of the road. "Anna," he said, "We've been seeing each other for a long time now. I was wondering if.....will you marry me?"

The answer was, "Yes."

FIRE

On the morning of August 17, 1921, the steamship Hampton Roads pulled into the harbor and blew its whistle five times, arousing the citizens of Smithfield. People were running out of their homes and the warehouses on Commerce Street. All of a sudden, someone smelled smoke. Factory No. 1 was burning! They gathered around the burning building and waited for help to come. An engine company from Suffolk arrived with some local firemen.

Anna was awakened from a peaceful sleep by a horn. As she looked out her bedroom window she could see wisps of smoke rising from the wharfs. "Mama! Papa! Come quick! There's a fire!" she yelled as she ran down the hall. She went outside where groups of people were already gathering. Her father was still inside getting dressed, but Mrs. Hayden was close behind her. Someone said the warehouses were on fire. Everyone

rushed down the hill to see better. All over the place was melted lard and burnt peanuts, and it had already begun to stink.

Despite the valiant efforts of the firefighters, by noon all but one block of Commerce Street was ashes and rubble. Anna's mother was standing next to her. There were tears coming from her eyes. "Oh Mama, don't cry," Anna said sympathetically.

"Oh Anna, these warehouses have been there for years. Now the Gwaltneys may never be able to rebuild them."

"Don't worry, Mama. Everything will be fine," said Anna comfortingly.

Two weeks later as Laura Turner's family drove down Commerce Street in their Model T, they saw that only one warehouse was left standing. Everything was so dreary. The air smelled of lard and burnt peanuts.

"Ugh! It smells awful around here," Laura said, holding her nose.

"You're right, and it's an awful sight. Let's go on home." Mr. Turner stopped the car, put the gears into reverse, and began to back up Wharf Hill.

"Why are we going backwards, Papa?" asked Laura.

"Because the driving power is in the back of the car, and this is a very steep hill," her father answered. Laura had learned something new about this invention called the automobile.

EPILOGUE

The factories that burned down in the fire on Commerce Street were never rebuilt. The old Smithfield Baptist Church burned down and was replaced by a newer church in Red Point Heights. The waterfront is a site for development now, and Filmore Jordan's warehouse is the Cotton Gin Theatre. The once popular "peanut capital of the world" is now a thriving "ham capital of the world." Smithfield has changed since the setting of this book about sixty years ago, and it will change even more in the years to come.

